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Wishing Wood

and other Verses

Agnes S. Falconer

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Wishing Wood
and other Verses

By
Agnes S. Falconer

London
A. C. Fifield, 13 Clifford's Inn, E.C.
1911

PRINTED BY
WILLIAM BRENDON AND SON, LTD.
PLYMOUTH

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS are due first and chiefly to the *Glasgow Herald*, also to *Chambers's Journal*, the *Westminster Gazette*, and the *Pall Mall Gazette*, for their kindness to a country muse and for permission to reprint poems included in this book.

AGNES S. FALCONER.

861815

TO

LADY PENTLAND

THIS TREASURE-TROVE INTANGIBLE

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Wishing Wood

I CAME alone by Wishing Wood
One summer twilight fair—
(Hast thou not been by Wishing Wood?
All mortal ways pass there!)
A bird sings yonder all night long:
Who stands and listens to that song,
Though he should wait a hundred year
Would think it but a moment's cheer.

Out of the wealth of Wishing Wood
I chose me blossoms three:
One for my scrip—one for my book—
One for the heart of me.
There's one makes poor the gold I earn:
There's one makes folly all I learn:
There's one I kept so near my breast
For many a day I knew no rest.

I would not change these idle spoils
For gold or glory's gleam:
They take me back to Wishing Wood
Once more, though in a dream.

A fount of gladness ripples there,
A bird song fills the fragrant air—
Wishing Wood is more to me
Than all the waking world I see.

The Well

I THRILL, I fill, I spill my brimming chalice,
This rocky cup, self-hewn;
Nor zephyr ruffles me, nor moon-tide rallies :—
My heart keeps her own tune
In winter's sparkling frost, in heavy heats of June.

A crystal mist-fall on the ferns and mosses,
Behold my largesse shine!
I quench world-thirst, repair the river-losses
And levels of the brine.
(Without my creeping thread, where were thy grapes, proud vine?)

I spring, I sing, I bring myself to being,
I spend and am not poor;
For ever filled—and still dispersed and fleeing
While sun and stars endure.
Bird, flower, and mortal, drink! Is not my Source secure?

So mateless, dateless, on the hillside lonely,
I take no thought of time
Listening to mine own music, heeding only
My rising bubble rhyme
That from Creation's dawn hath never lost its chime.

Windflowers

SO frail are we, pale are we,
Mist-thin, ghost-white—
Hark o'er us, spring's chorus
Trills all life's delight!
And no leaf stirs in all the wood
Yet see! our blossoms quiver!
Dance these not in thy solitude—?
For ever!

Ranger-thoughts, stranger-thoughts,
Dreams day denied—
Faint fancies, lost chances,
And visions that died.
Astir when all the world's at rest,
And not a leaf is shaken . . .
Do these not nightly in thy breast
Awaken?

So slight are we, light are we—
Brief are these hours!
We wither ere thither
June musters her flowers.

Witch-April's windflowers, flowers o' dream
In budded woodlands hiding,
In many a heart-nook glint and gleam
Abiding.

The Ordeal

OUT of the palace dungeon
They brought the slandered Queen;
They led her through the courtyard,
The serried guards between.

She wore a robe of linen,
Her little feet were bare,
And loose upon her shoulders
Flowed all her yellow hair.

Twelve plough-shares, hot to whiteness,
Now cooling down to red,
Marked out a dreadful pathway
For royal feet to tread.

And, fierce, beyond the gateway
Flamed up the fire of Doom,
If she escape not, ready
Her body to consume.

The King sat on the dais,
And cold he looked on her;
And near him sat the Lady Lois
In gold and miniver.

They blinded her and left her
To pass to life or death;
She stretched her hands and faltered;—
The great crowd held its breath.

Then suddenly, around her
A strange wind seemed to stir,
With sweet and heavy odour
Of frankincense and myrrh.

As strange and sudden courage
Unto her steps was lent,
With lifted brow, and smiling
So steadily she went.

All scatheless she went through them
Like one without a fear;
She passed; she stood beyond them;—
The great crowd woke a cheer!

But she tore off her bandage,
And sweet and shrill spake she,
"O, Mother! dear, dead Mother!—
Where art thou gone from me?"

In Autumn

YON young moon meek leans a pallid cheek
To the hillside, rough with fir,
And the barley saith, to the south wind's breath
Whatever he whispers her.
The field moves free, like a breaking sea—
The night hath none other stir.

This magic night of the growing light,
That shall wax to the harvest moon,
My whole heart yields, like the happy fields,
To the spell of a speechless rune.
And sad, tho' fain, I would list again
To my heart's old wayward tune.

For the circling year comes always here,
Whatever its hope or lore—
Fair Spring is fled and Queen Summer's dead,
And many a dream is o'er—
But my heart still clings to the old sweet things,
And dwells where it dwelt of yore.

Crocuses

WHO dreamed the frozen mould
These elfin cups might hold?—
Amethyst, ivory, gold!

This—pale as any nun:
This—flaming like the sun:
This—Tyrian dyes look dun!

Hark, prisoners of the hive,
Who hunger, thirst—survive!
The new flower-feasts arrive!

New beakers, sweet new wine!
Accept the seal and sign,
The magic wealth divine.

Come forth and drink anew!
Choose yellow, white, or blue!
Trebly, mine eyes drink too!

Guests of Dreams

(*To M. G.*)

THY House of Dreams hath one high pillared portal—
White marble: jasper green.
Most fit to greet thy mighty guests immortal
With angel looks serene.

Tall seraphs, whose white plumes from skies of even
Wear still the rosy stain:
Dead poets, who have healed with salve of Heaven
Their wounds of earthly pain.

Fair queens, whose looks once couched a thousand lances
And tiny fays, that creep
Through pink-rose petals shut to weave their dances
Around thee in thy sleep.

There is another doorway: low, half hidden,
Where briar and ivy twine—
A door, my door, where I may pass unchidden
To those dream-halls of thine.

. . . . . .

Set wide the pillared porch and bid them enter,
Bright spirits fair and free:
Leave the low door unlatched, where I may venture.
'Tis grace enough for me.

The Lost Kirk Garth

FAIR sepulchre have kings, but few, I wis,
More beautiful than this!
The tall grass trembles to its silver plumes
Over the sunken tombs.
Here are no flowers but such the wind hath sown
To dwell and die unknown.
Moon daisies, lifting high their scutcheons white—
(They sleep not day nor night)
Snow-stars of campion, and yon ivory, pale
Sweet honeysuckle trail—
No litanies: but such the blackbird saith
Who sings of Life, not Death.

After Life's heat, how pleasant here to sleep
In silence cool and deep.
Here, moor-encircled, hushed for evermore,
Forget the days of yore—
Forget the dreams, forget the sad and sweet,
Both victory and defeat,
Here, where the tall grass swings its silver plumes
And the pale daisy blooms—
Place of forgotten burials! here shall be
A narrow room for me!

Snow-Fall

OUTSIDE the pearl-built walls of Paradise
Long sloping acres lie
Beneath a tranquil sky,
None pass these silent fields in any wise
Save those brought near to die.

Fields pale with bloom of myriad dreamy flowers—
No buds like these are born
To dews of earthly morn—
Purer than snowdrops in the leafless bowers,
Or May's enchanted thorn.

There may be flowers within God's garden ground.
But mortals may not know
Their perfume, grace and glow;
Yet from these trance-held fields beyond the bound
Drifts down the silent snow.

Winter Aconite

GOLD heads and greenest frills! . . .
Snow powders all the hills,
Keen frost the brooklet stills.

Green hood and golden head! . . .
Late roses black and dead
Droop o'er your cradle-bed!

Gold beads in setting green . . .
Was this a necklet sheen
Lost by a fairy queen?

Green fringe and golden ball . . .
Life mocks with heralds small
Grim winter's strength and thrall!

Lavish your green and gold
Promise in wood and wold,
Leaf, blossom, as of old!

Doomed is the wintry power,
Signet thereof—a flower!
Strewn in a golden shower.

The Window

SOME may have their solitudes
Of spacious glades in leafy woods,
Or sunlit meadows stretching far,
Where with green grass white blossoms war;
Or high-walled gardens, rose beset,
Where never wakes a wind of fret,
But morn to even, all day long,
Bird after bird maintains the song.
Mine own soul finds, whate'er befall,
A cloister chamber white and small,
Musicless and picture bare,
But open to the salt sea-air.
There my lone soul sits all day,
Neither discontent nor gay,
Looking from the casement high
Across grey seas, beneath grey sky.
What hath she hope to see afar?
Perchance a sail, perchance a star.
She knows not what her vigil means;
Evermore she looks and leans.
Through some mystic sense she knows
Whatever fails, whatever goes,
This window, o'er the sad, grey sea,
Opens towards Eternity.

Violets

ALL of our secret sorrows
That are clear of sin and hate,
Watered with tears and hedged with fears,
And guarded early and late—
They are changed into violets, violets,
When they fall at the Heavenly Gate.

Strange balm hath Time for our healing.
Though the wound was sore and deep—
Yet some griefs stay through the work and play
And murmur in fields of sleep:—
They shall change into violets, violets:—
Know this and forbear to weep!

. . . . . .

I learned this rune in a woodland,
It sighed in the scented air
(So sweet it smelt as when Mary knelt,
Loosing her heavy hair)—
Myriads of violets, violets,
Were massed in the shadows there.

Snowdrop Lamps

WHITE snowbells of the youngling year!
Pearl-pendants on an emerald spear—
Maid-jewels, chaste and light and clear!

Out of the frozen breast of death
What wise enchantment quickeneth
Your beauty-legion at a breath?

Oh, troop of lovely mysteries!
White swinging lamps in flower-disguise
By angels lit in Paradise.

Too soiled our hands, too dull our thought,
To take, interpret as we ought,
This pure love-gift to winter brought!

Yet in dark temples of the mind
Some votive tablets, crystal-shrined,
These sacred lights, reflecting, find.

Hope, weary priestess, fills once more
Her own small lamp above the door,
And thinks her vigil almost o'er.

. . . . .

The snowdrop lamps are lighted. Lo!
Rise, all sad hearts, arise and go,—
Leave, leave these frozen wastes of woe.

Snowdrop Tryst

I SAW a snowdrop:
Finger-high, slender,
A footstep would crush her,
A least breath would bend her—
And flawlessly moulded
Her white petals, seeming
Like seraph wings, folded,
In peace of her dreaming.

I saw a snowdrop:
The robin foretold her,
While days darkened o'er us,
Still briefer, still colder.
The bright sun climbs higher,
She meets him all fearless,
With no blossom nigh her,
In innocence peerless.

I saw a snowdrop:
Farewell, winter sadness,
White bells! ring the prelude
Of full choral gladness,

Life's great tryst-hour keeping
The young snowdrops glimmer . . .
Yet—some must lie sleeping.
Mine eyes have grown dimmer.

The Snowdrop

THE missel-thrush, wild singer,
His loud, new message tells :
Beneath him, lightly swaying,
Tremble my fairy bells.
We know the self-same tune :
Now winter wanes, and soon
Life, sunlight, joy, and June.

No mortal, tho' world-weary,
May ever look on me
But he discerns, remembers
The child he used to be—
So innocent of stain,
And witless of all pain,
Pure, young, and glad again.

No mortal, though despairing,
Who finds me at his feet
But sees a flying vision,
Elusive, far, and sweet—
A light to follow still,
Redress for all life's ill,
With Spring's new call and thrill.

Madrigal

THE daylight dies; now flush the skies—
Rose, rose-and-gold;
They flush, they fade, and twilight's shade
Grows grey and cold.
Look up, my heart, and think, alas!
Lost light, how fair it was!

Hark! soft and near, how full and clear
That song subdued!
It floats, it fails; to listening vales
No more renewed.
Listen, my heart, and learn aright
Lost song, what lost delight!

Life's but a day that dies away,
A stinted song.
Be wise, be wise; the moment flies,
The night is long.
I hear a Voice repeat, repeat:
Lost love, how bitter-sweet!

Redbreast

THE swallow hath fled from the rain and the haze
Like a truant;
And the mavis, loud minstrel, hath stinted his praise
Once so fluent.
Where's a singing bird for the sullen morn?
Who shall bring a word to the meadow shorn?
Shall I? Shall I?
For the old love glow
Be it so.

No lark now blesses the daylight boon
Eastward breaking;
Nor nightingale for the wistful moon
Will sit waking.
They are gone, are fled from the autumn chill.
All alone, instead, I have songs to trill;
Oh, few! but true:
For the old love-cheer
Hearts will hear.

There's a last lone leaf to yon wind-stript bough
Fondly clinging:
And a last joy-thrill may the year win now
Through my singing:

In the drear low days of her pale distress
She shall hear the praise of my faithfulness,
Till I sing the spring
And the old love-gleam
To her dream.

Sir Redbreast

THE whistling wind may scatter wide
The dead leaves from thy cradle-tree,
The forest strips her summer pride,
And all the world is sad but thee.
Thy careless tune
Is touched with June
Hark! where the winter sorrows throng
My Robin finds a song!

I saw red squirrels in the trees
With eager haste their harvest win!
Early and late I marked the bees
From field and hedge fly heavy in.
No cunning hoard
Thy toil hath stored;
Yet while the winter threatens grim
My Robin frames a hymn!

Brave is that knightly heart of thine,
And bright thy tender vision clear—
Small songster, lonely in thy shrine,
The scattered temple of the year.

Spring builds again
The leafy fane.
Till then, by life's low-glimmering fire
The Robin shall not tire.

Lavender

NOW summer goes—
Lingers, bestows
One rich last gift of her making—
These, azure-dim,
Odorous, slim,
Lavender blooms for our taking.

So many flowers!
Such shining hours!
Many a bird's sweet "Come hither."
Then the rose fades,
Hushed are the glades,
Lavender's sweet, tho' it wither!

Pass them not by,
Silent and shy,
Sober, aloof in their seeming;
Through winter nights
Of June's delights,
Lavender sets us a-dreaming.

The Lustrous Midnight

THIS is the light that I have seen so often
When I have travelled Dreamland's paths afar,
With some weird shimmer all the scene to soften
Not sun nor moon nor star.

Oh, then my heart forgot the world's dull clamour,
Forbore to weave herself false spells of ill,
Made full surrender to the beckoning glamour
Went her own way at will.

Now do I sleep, or wake? The night hath given
To these sweet fields a fairer sheen than dawn;
There is no star in all that lucid heaven
And sun and moon withdrawn.

As if Life spake, "*Lift up, lift up thine eyes on*
Familiar sights and see them all anew
In this cramped circle of my fixed horizon
Sometimes wild dreams come true."

Experience

LIFE is not all we dreamed—
The fairy pageant fancy wove hath flown—
Sunshine and cloud lend beauty to her throne—
Yet other than we deemed.

Life is not all we planned—
Delights unearned are drifted near our feet:
While what the wild heart thought so dear, so sweet
Evades the wistful hand.

Life is not all we feared—
We veiled our eyes in vain, in bitter dread;
Some angel plume brushed near the humbled head—
Some magic whisper cheered.

Life gives, withholds, withdraws,
Shuts one stern portal, bids another ope,
Smiles down our terrors, cheats our firmest hope—
Who guesses by what laws?

So learn—nor grudge the cost—
From thine own heart the master-secret strange,
Some jewelled hours to lock beyond all change—
Life's best gifts—never lost.

Leaf and Sheaf

'TIS all across the cornfields,
The voice of the leaves
A myriad elfin whispers,
They call to the sheaves!
"Oh, why are you all silent?
Is the dancing done?
And the merry hours of music
'Neath the moon and sun?"
Weary head to weary head,
Not a word the corn-sheaves said.

"We woke to life together,
In the young spring's glee;
When you sprang from all the furrows,
We broke about the tree,
And with us the merle and ousel,
And the lark with you
Wove a fairy web of singing
All the summer through."
Weary head to weary head,
Never a word the corn-sheaves said.

"Oh, Life" (they said) "was rapture
Both at eve and morn,
When we thrilled with hope and gladness,
Growing leaf, springing corn!
Ye are changed, are hushed, dear comrades!
And we feel strange fear
Lest some bitter fate lie hidden
In the failing year!"
Weary head to weary head,
Corn-sheaves dream of summer dead.

The Whitethroat

HARK the whistle, siller-clear!
Watty Wheybeard's landed here.
Frae his howf across the main
Watty Wheybeard's here again.
He's a travelled gentleman,
Comes and gangs on his ain plan.
Where were ye the winter time?
"Far awa' frae frost and rime!"
April wakens—glinting, smiling,
All the land to bliss beguiling—
A' things budding, moving, springing—
Yonder's Watty Wheybeard singing!

Watty felt the hidden spells,
Saw afar his muirland dells,
Some strange pulse o' longin' stirred
In the wee heart o' the bird.
When the fierce south-easter blew
Watty took his wings and flew!
Mony a weary mile he came,
Never resting, sick for hame.

Now he views, like ony laird,
What the winter storm has spared
(Coonty Councils, keepin' snod
Thorn and briar alang the road,
Waur than ony winter storm,
Wi' their Philistine reform).
Never heed! There's covert warm
In the plantin' safe from harm;
Mony a corner, cosh and dern,
Thick wi' curly heids o' fern,
Bramble bushes where he'll find
House and haudin' to his mind,
All that he can wish or crave,
Watty whistles owre the lave!

Oh, you're welcome, sun or rain!
Watty Wheybeard—here again.

Foreshadowings

WHEN I looked forth at midnight
Stark was the frost and stern—
Lo! when the red sun rose again
He glittered through my window-pane
Through fairy tree and fern.

As if the mighty artist
Who paints the spring anew
Were sketching in the wintry time
With pencils of the frosty rime
The work he meant to do.

The Dark Saturday

(*May 7th*, 1910)

CHILL skies and grey
Leaden clouds rolling—
Faint, far away
Death bells dull tolling.

Through midnight valleys,
Touched by no spring,
To the King's Palace
Came a strange King.

None showed the way—
No guard saluted:
Where the King lay
He came sure footed.

Brief was the greeting:
Bells, when morn woke,
Told of the meeting,
Stroke and slow stroke.

Grey skies and cold,
Brooding disaster—
Bells sadly tolled:
Death is the master.

Lilac and Throstle

THE lilac wears purple
Yet proud is not she—
Amongst her dim arches
Long lingers the bee.
And she loves the brown thrush
That builds in the thorn—
He tarries and sings there
At twilight and morn.

In winter she sorrowed
All leafless and lone;
The brown thrush cow'red silent—
But winter is gone.
Young April, gift-bearer,
Hath paused by her side,
And she wears her blossoms,
And he woos a bride.

Now blithely she tosses
Her plumes at her will:
As blithely he whistles—
Light cadence, low trill—

O cuckoo! O swallow!
Their rapture you miss!
Who struggled together
Through winter to this.

Wind and Trees

THE birch-tree hath, for spending,
Rich hoards of gold, a shining store:
The wind woos her to lending:
But he will pay them back no more.
A vagrant, wasting in his flight
The treasure won with kisses light.

I watched her stoop and yield them:
I know, when winter nights are cold,
And birds have naught to shield them,
She'll wish again her squandered gold.
I'll hear her often, through my sleep,
With low complaining, moan, and weep.

Yet, like some gentle spirits
Who squander love on hearts untrue,
Time comes to deck her merits,
Not with old leaves, but leaves anew.
But, if the wind entreat once more,
Again she'll grant him all her store.

The Treasure of the Humble

(From the French)

OH Patience! thou holiest treasure,
Watch after watch, long nights we measure,
Star after star through the sky is borne.
Lo! 'tis the breaking morn.
(There's a silence falls when all speech is o'er,
And steersman, sail! thou shalt find a shore!)

Sweet Patience! thou gentlest maid,
On our bleeding wound be thy light hand laid;
Little by little the soft caress
Soothes to forgetfulness.
Time hath a balm for the smarting sore.
(Steer, sailor, steer, thou shalt find a shore.)

Oh Patience! thou saving power!
Grief shall be long, saith the sullen hour;
Time is her foeman, and she shall die,
And busy the bright days fly!
Many a shaft hath the sun in store!
(Lose not yet heart! thou shalt find a shore!)

Dear Patience! thy quickening breath
Calls new spring to the frost of death;
There is life asleep in the winter tomb—
Wait, and a rose shall bloom!
(This is a word with a mystic lore
Sail, sail on! thou shalt find the shore.)

The Changing Year

SPRING came to the window, and just looked through—
All the birds wakened and spoke her name—
She lingered, doubted, and half withdrew,
Then lifted the latch, and a soft wind blew,
And the world was changed when she came.

When the wild maid went, it were hard to say—
We missed her once from her wonted place;
She slipped from life in the self-same way—
But Summer held us her rosebuds gay,
And proffered us grace on grace.

Now the barley hath won her a silver veil
And the swallow is teaching her brood to fly—
(For she thinks of a flight when no wing must fail)
There's a hush on the hill, a hush in the dale.
I know that the Autumn is nigh.

Oh, foolish heart, that would fain hold fast
What flits and changes and fades away!
"It were good, so good, might it only last,"—
I have said it and sighed as the season passed,
And shall—to my dying day.

The Shilfa'

IT rained all night as cold as spite,
Nor yet the sun breaks through;
The shilfa' on the lilac spray
Hath still a hopeful word to say—
"I think I see some blue."

And all the while he means no guile,
He feels his message true;
So sure that Heav'n is still his friend
(There's joy to take and love to spend)
He thinks he sees some blue.

Were it not good in such a mood
The darkest day to view?
Forbear to chide, rebel, and fret,
But with the shilfa' hopeful yet,
Believe we see some blue.

Wine of Verse

"*The Poets pour us wine.*"—Mrs. Browning.

POETS pour us wine,
Grapes grow everywhere;
Fruitful, fertile, spreads the vine,
Wine—how rare!

Grapes for all to taste
Ripen where we range;
Still the red juice runs to waste—
It is strange.

Many fain would brew
For the winter bleak;
Others found the wine they drew
Harsh and weak.

Say what powers untold
To those bards belong
Whose bright vintage sparkles—old,
Sweet, and strong?

Was some mystic spell
On the winepress laid—
Angels, demons to compel
To their aid?

Hear the secret—kept
Safe of earth and heaven;
Heart-drops hot and tears he wept
Were the leaven.

A Moon Glimpse

THY lifted lamp, mild harvest moon,
Sheds mellow radiance o'er the sheaves;
I hear the river's murmuring croon—
The low wind-rustle through the leaves.

Southward my chamber window looks;
And, gazing thence, I seem to see
The years of yore, like ghostly stooks,
And, moving there, the ghost of me.

Heine

PLIANT and keen his wit as tempered steel,
But Fate was flint, and Fate denied his weal;
Think now what cruel impact woke the spark—
A star, once kindled, deathless in the dark!

The Proud Maiden

ALL in the morning's rosy flame,
I sat at my window high :
I never looked from my 'broidery frame
When my dear love rode by ;
Well I knew when my true love came,
But so proud a maid was I.

When the horse-beat died on the road afar
My heart grew soft again ;
I said, " He rides to the ranks of war,
And the press of fighting men.
When he rides home with the evening star
I will look—a little—then."

The twilight star came forth so clear ;
I saw my love once more ;
They carried him on a silent bier
With sad-faced bearers four ;
He did not listen my voice to hear
And he looked up no more.

My feet sped down the winding stair,
I knelt in the dusty way;
Who saw? Who wondered? I had no care
Nor thought what the world would say;
And a thousand kisses I wasted there
On his hand as cold as clay.

Florence Nightingale

NAME all blossom and song!
Lauded and loved so long!
Let us be glad of the years
And the rest that comes at length
To that heart of pity and strength,
Nor sully her shroud with tears.

Peace hath brought to the grave
Many she saved in war;
For she went to the field to save
When the red tide ran afar.
Like a half-heard echo to-day
The name of each fierce affray.
But the woman's voice, pure gold,
That whispered mercy and ruth,
Order, purity, truth—
It is heard in the night as of old!

Conquerors, pass with your fame!
Vanquished! pass with your shame!
Time shall not touch with wrong
This name all blossom and song!

Since not for fame did she strive,
But to rescue and hold alive
The poor broken men, her brothers,
Who bled for the pride of others.
And out of the well of her grace
A river of pity hath spread,
That watereth, strives to efface
The stain of the world blood-red.
And wherever this cup is quaffed
Her name be named with the draught—
Florence, flower of all flowers,
The world's dear lady—and ours!

Fourscore and ten were her years.
See! where she slumbers: proud
But meek in her virgin shroud—
Is it a time for tears?

The Pool of Sonn

(*A Teutonic Myth*)

"O PILGRIM, say! Is this the way
Leads to the Pool of Sonn?"
"Nay, none may teach that Pool to reach
Of all who there have gone:
Some are full glad, some bitter-sad
That ever they looked thereon.

Far slumbering in the misty moor,
'Tis ringed with many a reed,
And icy-cold, and crystal-pure
These waters be, indeed!
Deep as the earth's foundations sure
Are the secret springs to feed.

At morn, in Spring, who drinketh there
Shall learn a music clear,
Songs of delight, to cure men's care
With an elfin note of cheer—
Blithe through the world may the minstrel fare
Whom all shall love to hear.

And he shall learn Love's hidden lore
Who kneels in the Summer noon.

Love's master-magic for evermore
Shall tremble through his tune.
Earth may not know nor hath heard of yore
The spell of a deeper rune.

Who drinks in the Autumn twilight dim
When the fields are full of corn,
Shall string his harp to a solemn hymn
Whereon men's souls are borne
To the golden courts of the Seraphim
At even or at morn."

. . . . . .

"And wert thou there in the Spring-time fair
When the dews of dawning shone—
Or with Summer's leaf, or the ripened sheaf,
Thou pilgrim, grey and lone?
What reed of thought hast thou plucked and brought
From the mystic Pool of Sonn?"

. . . . . .

"My late feet found that haunted ground
In the winter waste and woe:
With trembling speed this withered reed
I plucked from the frozen snow—
A cold wind blew the bare thorn through
And the white moon glimmered low."

River Wisdom

WISE is the river!
Good counsel-giver!
Through reed and rush,
O'er rock and gravel,
Steady to travel,
Still she saith "Hush!"

Ye, whom wayfaring
Brings nigh despairing,
Hear the old rune!
One word, one only,
Iterate, lonely,
Sounds in her tune.

So much vain preaching
Argument, teaching—
Here is a charm!
Hearts, that discern it,
Hold it and learn it,
Come to no harm.

White Frost

FERNS, that the rain beats down,
Lost leaves, ragged and brown,
The dim grass, trodden, despised, and sodden,
All have their jewels to-night,
Lo! how they shine in white.

See! for the hour transforms
This hillside swept of the storms
Where the moonlight blesses what white frost kisses—
Purity, silence, light,
Healing the winter blight!

. . . . . .

There's no song slackens the trend
Of life to its fore-doomed end:
To capture June, we might find a tune—
So the wild birds thought—and I . .
Like a vision she passed us by.

And yet, how a heart finds pleasure
In life with its lessened measure!
Where the red rose grows, let us sing the rose!
If the rose and the song be dead,
Here's silence and peace instead.

THE END

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